

Tummy Tuck: Redesigning Your Midsection

Sometimes all of the exercising and dieting in the world cannot get rid of the midsection that results from a lifetime of weight fluctuations or pregnancy. The body changes that a woman will experience to her midsection with one pregnancy, let alone multiple pregnancies can lead to unwanted changes; sagging skin, stretch marks and even muscle separation in the abdominal wall.

What is a tummy tuck?

The tummy tuck is designed to correct several of the changes brought about by pregnancy or massive weight loss in women. Men also benefit from abdominal wall contouring after weight loss. The procedure can improve the appearance of excess abdominal fat, skin and tissue in healthy adults, leading to a flatter, more trim waistline.

A full tummy tuck, or abdominoplasty, is defined by an incision that runs from hip to hip along the lower abdominal area. An additional incision is made around the navel, and excess upper and lower abdominal skin and fat is pulled down and trimmed, creating a flatter, more contoured abdominal wall. The rectus muscles that shape and provide core strength to the abdominal wall are also repaired and brought back into closer alignment, further contouring the waist.

A full abdominoplasty is a major operation that can take two to four hours in the operating room and it should be

performed by a board certified plastic surgeon. Recovery time is usually four to six weeks and individuals should expect to wait six weeks before returning to their exercise routine.

A mini tummy tuck, which uses a shorter incision in the lower abdomen, is perfect for patients who have a small to moderate amount of skin and fat excess but do not need repair of the upper abdominal muscles. No incision around the navel is required with a mini tummy tuck. Liposuction is used in a limited fashion to the lateral hip area in both full and mini tummy tucks.

The Effects of Pregnancy

A tummy tuck is used to correct rectus diastasis, a condition where the abdominal wall muscles have separated. The most common reason these muscles become weakened is multiple pregnancies. Many women have some degree of this condition and might not know it. Women come to my office frustrated at the appearance of their abdomen, despite a great exercise routine and good nutrition. Abdominoplasty surgery closes the muscle separation and flattens the abdomen in a way that even vigorous exercise cannot, supplementing and enhancing a patient's goal of a more attractive midsection.

Post partum women seeking a toned tummy should wait at least 6-12 months after nursing before considering abdominoplasty. I advise my patients to



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Pre and postoperative view of a patient undergoing a full abdominoplasty

certainly wait until they are done having children before having this procedure – as the benefits of surgical abdominal wall contouring are lost if a patient were to become pregnant again.

5 Highlights of Tummy Tuck Surgery:

- Choose only a doctor certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery.
- Agree only to surgery performed in an accredited facility with a board certified anesthesiologist or possibly a certified nurse anesthetist to administer anesthesia and monitor your health.
- Review before and after photos, understand what a realistic result looks like and what the scars look like. Come with a list of questions for your surgeon about the procedure.
- Ask specifically where the incision will be and accept that you will have scars. Scars may heal wide, red or raised, even if you follow all the instructions you were given.
- Accept that your procedure will require a recovery of days to weeks and that, as with any surgery, there are some risks involved.

For more information, you may contact Dr. Laura Randolph or Dr. Chad Tattini at Twin City Plastic Surgery 309-664-6222 or 309-664-1007 www.twincityplasticsurgery.com. Their office is located at 2502 E. Empire in Bloomington.

By Laura C. Randolph, MD
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